

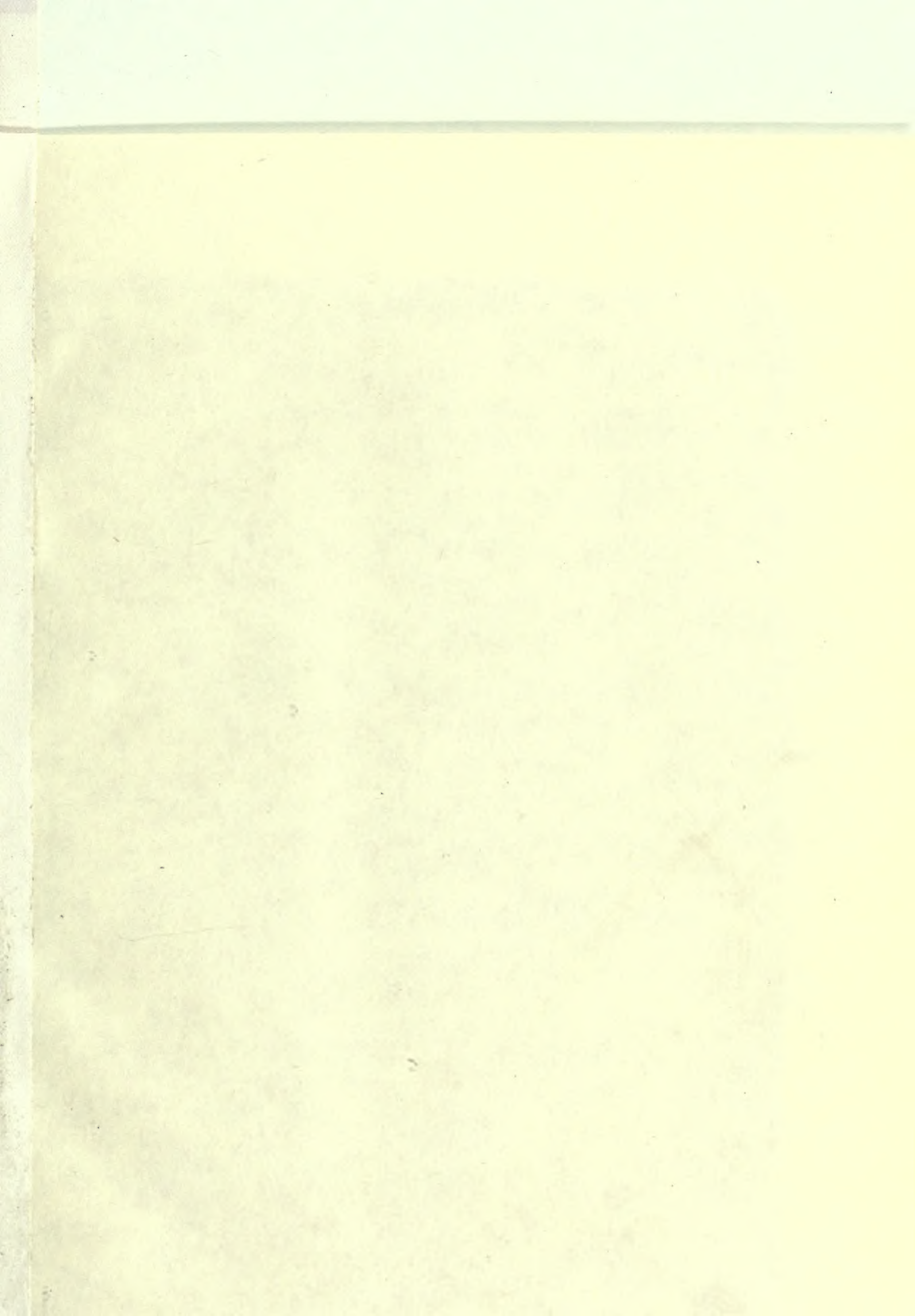
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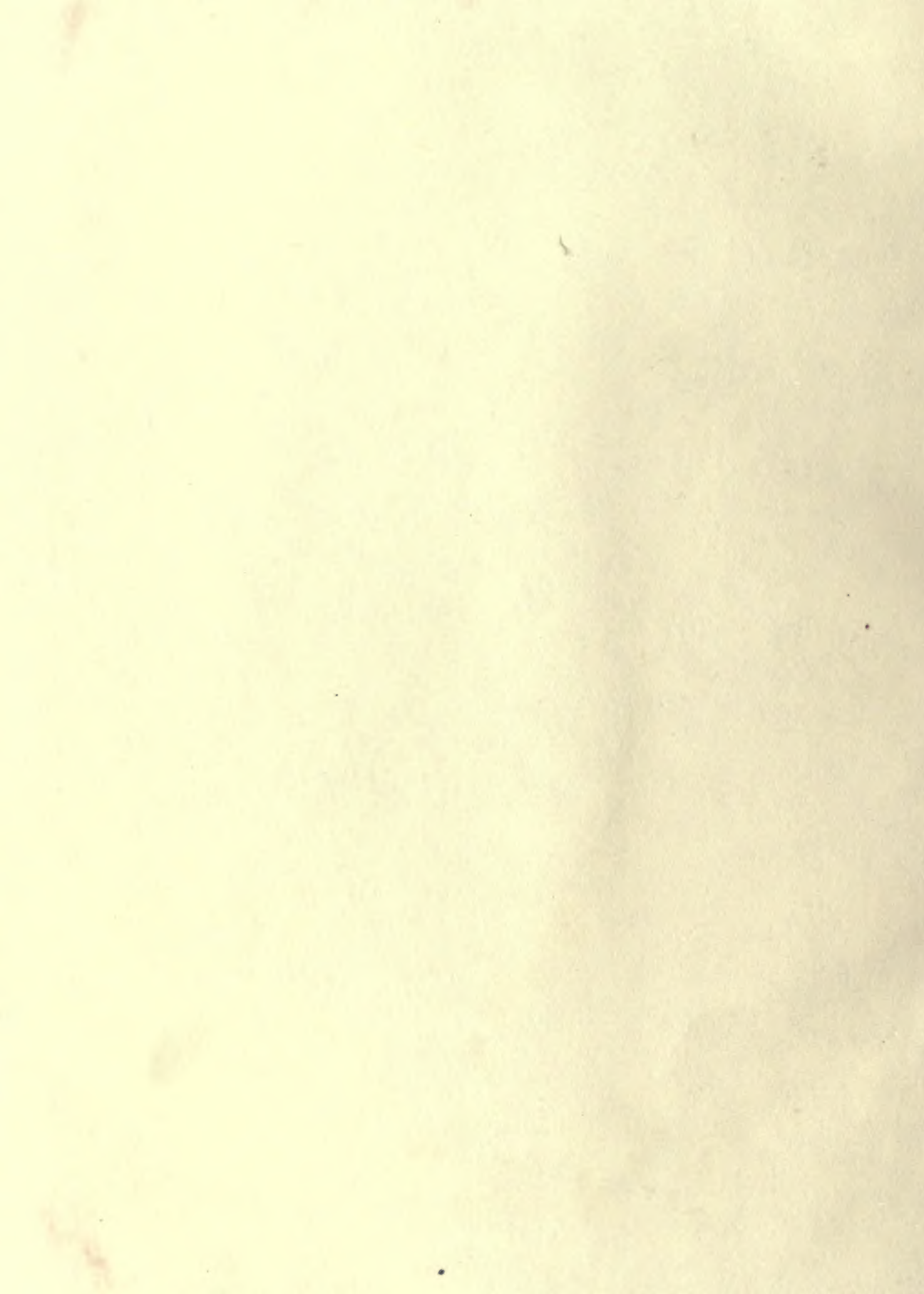
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AMY LOWELL

A CRITICAL
APPRECIATION

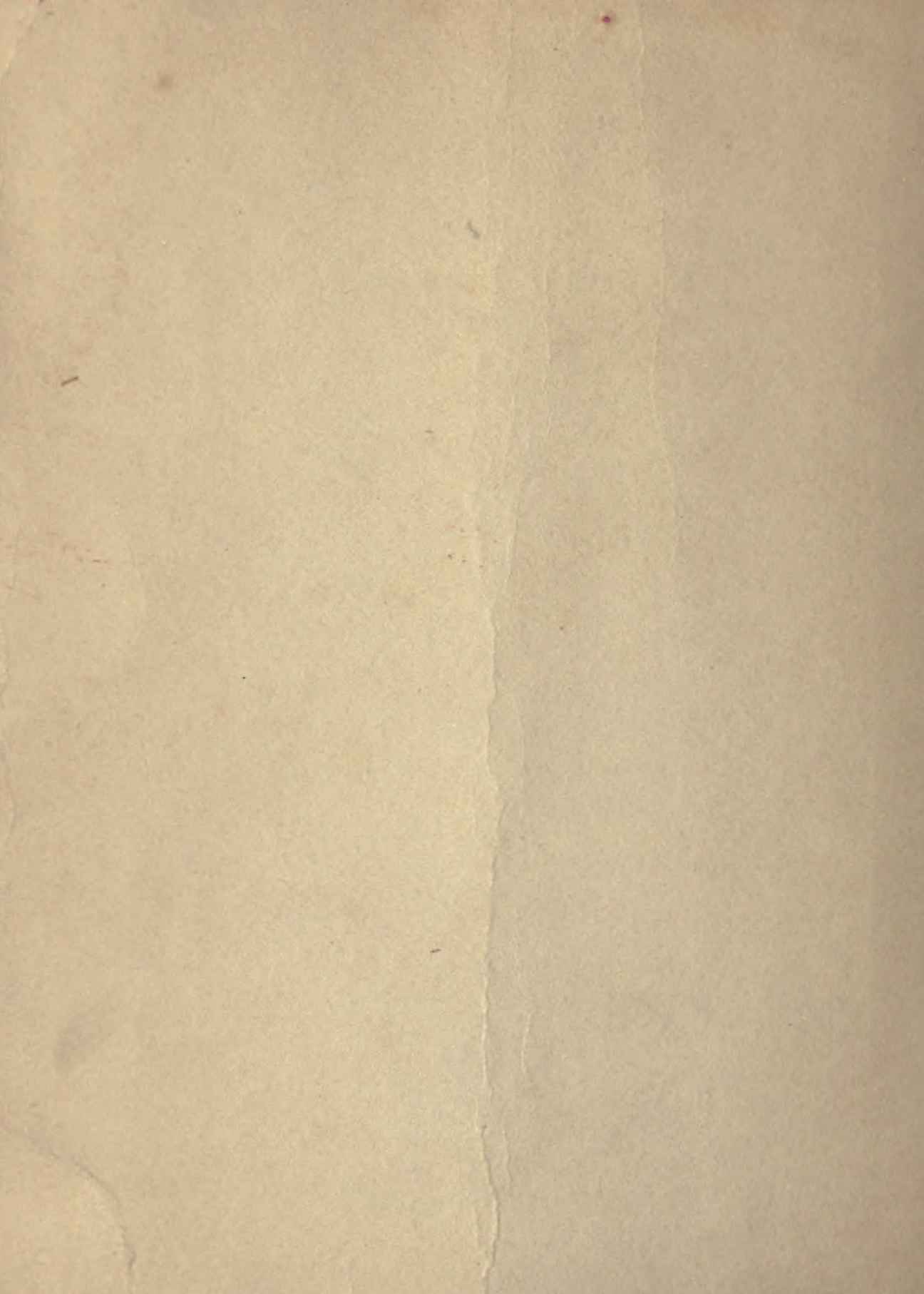
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W. BRYHER

SECOND EDITION

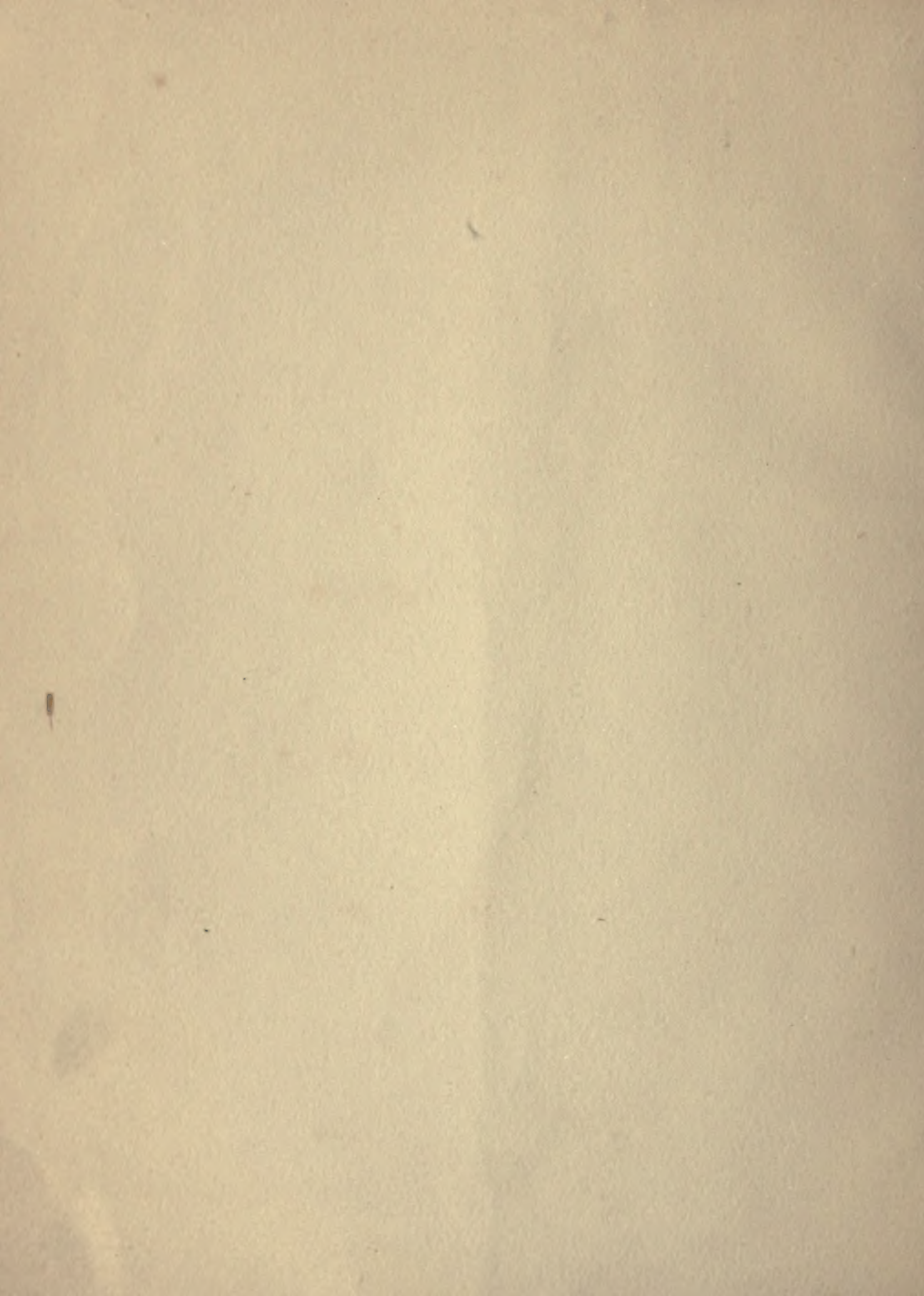
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1918

Price Half-a-Crown



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THE ART OF AMY LOWELL



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A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

AMY LOWELL, American author, was born in Brookline, Mass., on February 9th, 1874. Her brother is President Lowell, of Harvard. She has won distinction as a poet and a critic of the first order by five books:—

“ A Dome of Many-Coloured Glass ” (1912).

“ Sword Blades and Poppy Seeds ” (1914).

“ Six French Poets ” (1915).

“ Men, Women and Ghosts ” (1916).

“ Tendencies in Modern American Poetry ” (1917).

Other poems alluded to in the following Appreciation are “ Guns as Keys ; and the Great Gate Swings,” printed in “ The Seven Arts Magazine,” “ Lacquer Prints ” in “ Poetry,” and “ Sea-Blue and Blood-Red ” in the “ North American Review.” Many poems by Amy Lowell were printed first of all in the Imagist Anthologies.

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THERE was a time, loath as I am to confess it, when America's place in my chart of literature was still to mark. It was unknown, unworthy of exploration, a Polar waste lit, at best, with the sparse and mediocre echoes of English writers of a forgotten age. For newness in poetry, for freshness, for that vital originality so lacking in modern verse, I scanned the horizon of England, France, Europe, scanned it despairingly, and—overlooked the West.

A great age of French development panted towards an end. The impulse forward resulting in "vers libre," the period of experiment that produced such widely differing writers as Paul Fort and Henri de Regnier drifted into eddies of theory and conscious cleverness. The elemental greatness disappeared. With perhaps a few exceptions, belonging both by years and inclination to a past generation, England was in worse plight. Either abandoned to the faultless imitation of the form and thought of a dozen traditional poets, lifeless as the ephemeral hollows a cowrie prints in the sand, or the prey of an unlearned horde who translated "vers libre" to mean an idle jargon of barren words and un-rhythmic thought, verse had become the passing whim of a leisure moment. It was desecration to whisper a poet must learn his trade. The foundations and treasuries of literature—a stereotyped few apart—were alike left unexplored. Nothing was vivid, every-

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thing was blurred. So, while people talked glibly of the renewal of interest in poetry and book after book was bought to be cast aside, so unsatisfying was its weakness, I drifted in my despair alarmingly near the pernicious fallacy that with 1900 all inspiration must have ceased.

The mere accident of an enthusiasm for foreign experiment led to the study of "Six French Poets," which, curiously enough, kept me, by its very excellence, from reading Miss Lowell's poetry for a whole year, so unwilling was I to spoil the impression of this volume by turning to what I feared could not be other than inferior verse. Twelve months later a final rebellion that this modern world should be so inarticulate of the beauty I could not but perceive on either hand sent me in quest of "Men, Women and Ghosts," to find, on opening its pages, I had stumbled into a freshness of vision denied so long that it had become a myth.

To believe loveliness to be at point of death and find she was but sleeping—to falter upon her in the stir of her early wakefulness and touch the fluttering petals as they slip from her unused arms, is to be admitted to a share of her rediscovery of morning, to become tinged one's self with the dropping eagerness of dawn. Yet it was no mere craving for novelty which acclaimed this poetry. Often had I been reproached for clinging too passionately to the past, but actual dwelling for so long with the ardent Elizabethans had rendered insupportable the insincere and faltering artificialities of the contemporary literature I had explored. Nor was it beauty of form, nor the fresh delight of this new perception of the power of the "exact" word, but recognition of vigour and unrestricted

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thought, a welded root of strength and richness, absent from literature too long a space, uniting the expression of moods hitherto deemed incapable of translation into speech. I wanted a new world, and in the Imagist writers—particularly in Miss Lowell—all I needed lay before the eyes.

Biographical details of Miss Lowell are scanty. A few facts, a few dates confirm what is apparent in her writings, for she, of all poets, has merged even imaginary experience so intently into her own individuality that her poetry becomes, as she has spoken somewhere of a letter, "A piece I chipped from off my heart." The earliest of her volumes, "A Dome of Many-Coloured Glass," bears the date 1912.

A casual glance would stamp the book as one of immaturity, and immature, judged by the confident richness of her later work, much of it certainly is. Yet the intense originality so distinctive of her nature already dominates every page. Imagism in the making, matrix of an ore as yet unworked, unformed expression jostling a line vigorous with maturity, perhaps in "The Fairy Tale" is it easiest to trace the elemental fibres of those roots afterwards to frame that iridescent jar of dreaming, from whose curving edges, poem after poem, tinged and pungent with its lustre, will escape to print.

"On winter nights beside the nursery fire
We read the fairy tale, while glowing coals
Built its pictures. There before our eyes
We saw the vaulted hall of traceried stone
Uprear itself, the distant ceiling hung
With pendant stalactites like frozen vines ;

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And all along the walls at intervals,
Curled upwards into pillars, roses climbed
And ramped and were confined, and clustered leaves
Divided where there peered a laughing face.
The foliage seemed to rustle in the wind,
A silent murmur, carved in still, grey stone.
High pointed windows pierced the southern wall
Whence proud escutcheons flung prismatic fires
To stain the tessellated marble floor
With pools of red, and quivering green and blue;
And in the shade beyond the further door,
Its sober squares of black and white were hid
Beneath a restless, shuffling, wide-eyed mob
Of lackeys and retainers come to view
The Christening.

A sudden blare of trumpets, and the throng
About the entrance parted as the guests
Filed singly in with rare and precious gifts.
Our eager fancies noted all they brought,
The glorious unobtainable delights;
But always there was one unbidden guest
Who cursed the child and left it bitterness.

The fire falls asunder, all is changed,
I am no more a child, and what I see
Is not a fairy tale, but life, my life.
The gifts are there, the many pleasant things:
Health, wealth, long-settled friendships, with a name
Which honours all who bear it, and the power
Of making words obedient. This is much;
But overshadowing all is still the curse.
That never shall I be fulfilled by love!
Along the parching high road of the world
No other soul shall bear mine company.
Always shall I be teased with semblances,
With cruel impostures, which I trust a while
Then dash to pieces, as a careless boy
Flings a kaleidoscope, which shattering

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Strews all the ground about with coloured sherds.
So I behold my visions on the ground
No longer radiant, an ignoble heap
Of broken, dusty glass. And so, unlit,
Even by hope or faith, my dragging steps
Force me forever through the passing days."

I have chosen to quote this poem first, not because it is the best in the volume (it is not) but for the autobiographical importance of those first three lines. Nothing counts for so much in the training of a writer as the kind of nourishment supplied to his early imagination, and was not this re-creation of the written story in the embers, this unison of seeing and hearing, a sharpness of picturing later to ripen into the epic magnificence of "Guns as Keys; and the Great Gate Swings." I am aware I have no actual warrant for asserting that Miss Lowell ever sat by the fire and read fairy tales, but even those unimaginative people to whom "vers libre" is simply an unmetrical prose may forgive me for assuming it was no impossible experience. The literature of infancy is, happily, full of colour, and perhaps she owes to this earliest of all reading that quality of a pristine venturing never to be truant from her dreams.

"The Boston Athenæum," reminiscent technically of Browning, is another valuable picture of the hours of older reading, record of that long apprenticeship to literature. Miss Lowell undoubtedly has served to attain her mastery of expression and her power "of making words obedient." How much does her poetry owe, I wonder, to that space when, "reading at times and at times simply dreaming," the seed of innumerable impressions

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wove into an intricate honeycomb of translucent gold, the trenchant years alone, bursting a sterile darkness, were to set at liberty?

"Summer" again links itself to a whole sequence of future moods, for, turning from the thick branches and her well-loved moonlight (whose very soul later she is to capture), the core of all her inspiration burns to the lines—

"But more than this, and much, ah, how much more,
I love the very human heart of man."

It is because the universe is so personal to her, because "every new experience is gain" that her poetry, leaping, flickering, is so original, so strong with life.

In place of the "unrelated" and experimental poems, to loom so largely in her future volumes, quite a dozen of these first published verses are stamped with the definite influence of literature she has read. True, her personality persists in rending these echoes—crash of water throbbing through distant grasses—but "New York at Night" and "Towns in Colour" in thought, as well as form, are a century apart.

Crude and unawakened as much of the volume seems, perhaps because there is no line therein that her maturity has not surpassed, yet there is one section that bears no trace of incomplete development, that alone would rank this book, not with the fascination of beginnings, but with literature itself. It is the section that, comprising most of the sonnets, halts a little with "Venetian Glass" and attains with "Dipsa" to a hot and troubled loveliness of thought.

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They are very beautiful, these poems, though sad with a more than immature weariness—the weariness of silence, of a loneliness so passionate it must have outlet, and so stumbles, faltering, into words. Solitude, the terrible sense (as in “Fruit Garden Path”) of moods nothing will understand, the hunger for escape “to be some other person for a day,” beating intolerable wings in a limited boundary of space. Of course it is more than form alone, still it is curious to notice in the following volume, how with the discovery of “unrhymed cadences” came also the discovery of life, it is only with the casting aside of traditional form, that the poet leaps from wistfulness and twilight, triumphantly to morning.

Development is ever of essential interest to me, but it is seldom growth in a writer’s mind, outlook, can be traced in such detail and astounding measure, as in Miss Lowell’s books. But though the fibres are visible from which Imagism is to blossom, definite touch of it is absent, or hovers a line or two, fearful of alighting. This was in 1912. In 1914 the first “*Anthologie des Imagistes*” was printed, in which Miss Lowell is poorly represented by a single beautiful cadence, as idiomatic of her speech as anything she has written and the earliest poem (according to accessible dates) of that region, so instinct with dreamed reality it is more vivid than an actual world, Miss Lowell’s own province, in which we are admitted to the daily company of loveliness, through the magic of her phrase. With “*Sword Blades and Poppy Seed*,” published two months later, we are in the full maturity of Imagist expression.

“A drifting, April, twilight sky”—simple words, but a magic in their quiet ordering, sets the cold weariness of a winter’s delaying

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in a flash of windy sound before the eyes. Cold, and the discouragement, inseparable from writing, of a mood, heavy with song, that will not be articulate.

"All day my thoughts had lain as dead
Unborn and bursting in my head."

Adventure, avid of surprises, would choose the sharpness of a moment "Starved of a day's accomplishment" and disconsolate of calmness, to fulfil that dreamed association with some mind, whose speech—drops of unmoulded poetry—should set, fire-wise, every thought of the listener, tense with a lifting flame. An old man, begging the loan of a car-fare, plucks at the poet's sleeve, who, unable to grant the request and impelled by a sense of near and overmastering greatness, follows the stranger to his distant home. Day fades, and the streets fade as they go together, the poet unconscious of all save his companion, for

"His talk became the element
Wherein my being swam content."

To Miss Lowell a jar or a curving scimitar is never an inanimate loveliness to rest the eyes on for a moment and forget, but individual, full of mood and impression, and nowhere is the sense of this captured more vividly than, as the strange house is entered, flamelight reveals a space lustred with lacquer and painted porcelain and a flickering marvel of pointed swords—a room of poems caught under the guise of rapiers and pottery—bewildering, uncomprehended, until a voice breaks the perplexed imaginings,

"All books are either dreams or swords."

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Pressing his wares slowly, in speech concentrated of the seed of thought, Ephraim Bard, dealer in words, offers of his store to the poet, amazed, fearful of payment.

But the quiet voice brings reassurance,

“Who buy of me must simply pay
Their whole existence quite away,”

and the startled poet hears from another what his own heart has told him, of the call and the necessity of a learning, untainted by aridity, a learning, inevitable with loneliness and with surrender. Only this, “what even childhood gave” in payment, and in the exhausted reaction of an exultant moment, laden with blades and seed, the poet stumbles out into sunrise, into morning.

It is interesting to wonder if “unrhymed cadence” and “polyphonic prose” were the results of a visit to Ephraim Bard. Certainly this volume marks an immense advance. It is strange how fond Miss Lowell is of comparing a poem to a jar. True as this is of the outward semblance of her work, wonder of carving, immortal with colour, it is too narrow a simile for her. It is rather the life rounding and filling it, almost cracking the vase, life, born of a crushed loneliness, that is the core and spirit of her poetry. Even stone in her hands is never inanimate. She has captured the coldness of bubbling water and the luminous vigour of the sun. It is impossible to read her poems and remain quiescent. Contact with a solitary cadence stirs one too, insensibly, to life. But here is an example—“A Gift.”

“See! I give myself to you, Beloved!
My words are little jars

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For you to take and put upon a shelf.
Their shapes are quaint and beautiful,
And they have many pleasant colours and lustres
To recommend them,
Also the scent from them fill the room
With sweetness of flowers and crushed grasses.

When I shall have given you the last one,
You will have the whole of me,
But I shall be dead."

This is an excellent illustration of the new or Imagist tendencies in poetry. There is not a single useless word. The whole atmosphere is etched by a single line at the beginning and merges into an emotion, stripped to its beating elements, into a dream rhythmic with colour. Finally, in what might be termed the "Imagist ending" the whole, the dream is related to the actual present in a phrase instinct with irony and truth.

MISCAST.

I have whetted my brain until it is like a Damascus blade,
So keen that it nicks off the floating fringes of passers-by,
So sharp that the air would turn its edge,
Were it to be twisted in flight.
Licking passions have bitten their arabesques into it,
And the mark of them lies, in and out,
Worm-like,
With the beauty of corroded copper patterning white steel
My brain is curved like a scimitar,
And sighs at its cutting
Like a sickle mowing grass.

But of what use is all this to me !
I, who am set to crack stones
In a country lane !

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Has the hopeless anguish of a spirit, sharp with vision and adventure, beaten back to spill upon itself, wasted, dulled by the pressure of restricting circumstance, ever been more poignantly expressed ?

A LADY.

You are beautiful and faded
Like an old opera tune
Played upon a harpsichord ;
Or like the sun-flooded silks
Of an eighteenth-century boudoir.
In your eyes
Smoulder the fallen roses of outlived minutes,
And the perfume of your soul
Is vague and suffusing,
With the pungence of sealed spice jars.
Your half-tones delight me,
And I grow mad with gazing
At your blent colours.

My vigour is a new-minted penny,
Which I cast at your feet.
Gather it up from the dust
That its sparkle may amuse you.

The eighteenth century, this sensitiveness to frail and faded imaginings Henri de Régnier has made his own in "*La Cité des Eaux*"—possess an extraordinary fascination for Miss Lowell. Is it because this quietness blending with a fragile unreality of dream has become a refuge from the passion and truth of her own vision ? Yet, unlike de Régnier, who has painted the stained porphyry until it seems lovelier than the golden fish circling the silent water, everything she touches lives. In her poems exists, not the decay of a period, but the imperceptible breathing of the age itself,

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fragrant, stirring, under a thin semblance of inaction and soft colour.

The short poems at the end of "Poppy Seed" Miss Lowell herself will find it hard to surpass. But she does not confine herself to "vers libre." There is a compact rareness about the sonnets in this volume seldom attained in the restriction of this form. Unforced, concentrated as any cadence, surely "A Blockhead" or "A Petition" should be an overwhelming rebuke to those who attack development in literature on the ground it is but the unlettered utterance of a few too ignorant, too unskilled to confine themselves within traditional form. Here is another poem, packed as full with the new tendencies as any she has not rhymed:—

PATIENCE.

Be patient with you ?
When the stooping sky
Leans down upon the hills
And tenderly, as one who soothing stills
An anguish, gathers earth to lie
Embraced and girdled. Do the sun-filled men
Feel patience then ?

Be patient with you ?
When the snow-girt earth
Cracks to let through a spurt
Of sudden green, and from the muddy dirt
A snowdrop leaps, how mark its worth
To eyes frost-hardened, and do weary men
Feel patience then ?

Be patient with you ?
When pain's iron bars

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Their rivets tighten, stern
To bend and break their victims ; as they turn,
Hopeless, there stand the purple jars
Of night to spill oblivion. Do these men
Feel patience then ?

Be patient with you ?
You! My sun and moon !
My basketful of flowers !
My money-bag of shining dreams ! My hours,
Windless and still, of afternoon !
You are my world and I your citizen.
What meaning can patience have then ?

Passing from the delicate humour of "Music" and "Astigmatism" to the power of "The Forsaken" and the technical mastery of "The Book of Hours of Sister Clotilde," blazoned magnificent as the picture whose history it relates in points and tints of flowers and light, the range and originality of these poems are amazing. "The Great Adventure of Max Breuck" and "The Shadow," beautiful as they both are, perhaps have been dulled a little by her later narratives ; but it is difficult to believe words could ever be so transmuted to colour as in "The Captured Goddess," or phrases carved out of such true and luminous stillness as "The Precinct, Rochester." Personally I own to a fondness for "A London Thoroughfare," while seldom has a rarer expression of the form alone of loveliness been attained than in "Clear, with Light Variable Winds."

, The fountain bent and straightened itself
In the night wind,
Blowing like a flower.

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It gleamed and glittered,
A tall white lily,
Under the eye of the golden moon."

How subtle is the cadence ; there is more than the mere water in these words. Splendid as are "A Basket" and "In a Castle," both are better left till the next volume and consideration of polyphonic prose as a whole. But is more development possible in two years, for "Men, Women and Ghosts" was published in 1916?

The first three poems in the division which begins the book, "Figurines in Old Saxe" are studies of loneliness, the effect of solitude and repression on three sensitive and individual minds.

A fragment blown from Spring, once "Pickthorn Manor" is read, how can the words help but frame a picture of moonlight and thick cherry branches! Briefly, the tale is this. Eunice, left alone while her scarce known husband, Everard, wars in Flanders, meets by pure accident Gervase Deane, home, wounded from the Flemish fighting. Both are lonely ; the meeting leads to friendship, and for Gervase ripens "into strong and watchful loving," of which no word escapes his lips. Grieving for her lord, a touch of sun, and fancying one hot morning Everard is before her, Eunice yields to Gervase, love. It is only for a moment ; a cackling laugh from a hunchback servant who has seen them from the bushes, Eunice recovering full consciousness and with it knowledge of her mistake, that it is Gervase, not Everard, who stands before her, orders him away. For days they keep apart till the unendurable solitude forces them to meeting, gravely, with no eagerness, and with the horror of that hour's mistake haunting both minds. At

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the nearing of autumn Everard himself returns, to be repulsed at first by Eunice, fearful of her starved imagination dazing her again with falseness. The hunchback whispers a poisoned tale, and Everard, unwilling to credit his lady's eyes had been but dazzled with sun, grows harsh, cruel, in his mistaken fury. Winter comes, and with it a letter from Gervase, begging a final farewell before he leaves for Flanders, hopeful of death, there. To avoid listeners they meet by the river, pushing a boat into mid-stream. Everard, watching, springs at the craft ; it overturns and they drown, entangled together among the cold roots of the quiet river.

But it is not the tale. It is all in the telling. How the poet has caught the weariness of beauty, its cold uselessness to a heart repressed of love ; her eyes—

"Would brim and spill their tears when all they saw
Was the bright sun, slant-wise
Through burgeoning tree, and all the morning's flame
Burning and quivering round her."

Nor is that dangerous apathy, born of solitude, which drives Eunice to grasp at any break in the monotonous barrier of days, less excellently shown.

A piece of Spring. And how the house lives, with its portraits, its sense of history. For richness of description could anything be more beautiful than this ?

"Eunice forgets to eat, watching their faces
Flickering in the wind-blown candle's shine.
Blue-coated lackeys tiptoe to their places
And set out plates of fruit and jugs of wine.
The table glitters black like Winter ice.

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The Dartle's rushing and the gentle clash
Of blossomed branches, drifts into her ears.
And through the casement sash
She sees each cherry stem a pointed slide
Of splintered moonlight, topped with all the spice
And shimmer of the blossoms it uprears."

And how lightly, but how firmly, in the following stanzas is the brief happiness of her space with Everard suggested, binding the shifting, barren hours into a frame of indestructible memory. "Among her hopes she lived," and therein lies the tragedy. Repression is an evil thing, and blunts her natural quickness from perceiving more than a brotherly affection break from Gervase as the days go by "threaded with talk and verses." Only a few lines, yet how magical is the picture of their quick, impulsive friendship, inevitably transient, inevitably to ripen on one side or the other, into love. The frail, uncaptured cadences of Spring are blown through the classic metre, till, in speaking of the poem one should borrow, not words, but petals from the same orchard, where

"Black-hearts and white-hearts, bubbled with the sun
Hid in their leaves and knocked against each other."

With the "Cremona Violin" we come to a different atmosphere, to another aspect of the common root of loneliness, the tragedy not so much of solitude as of repression. It is no longer the rich darkness of a house "geranium-hued," delicate with fruit blossoms against a blue river, but Munich, "a pasted city on a purple ground" in the summer storm which begins the poem. His life entangled with his violin, Herr Concert Meister Theodore Altgeld is a study of another favourite theme, the absorbing of

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every impulse into some solitary interest, leaving but a shell responsive to surrounding personal influence. Puzzled, bewildered, by the overbrimming love of Charlotta, his wife, Altgeld will not have her talk disturb him, meets her half-articulate warmth with an uncomprehending coldness, her eagerness with the technicalities of music, and works, night after night, leaving her to find

"Sighing comfort with a moon in bloom."

Unable to settle to her knitting for thought of Theodore, yet aware three hours must pass before his knock will startle her listening ears, Charlotta strays into her garden among the hollyhocks and currant bushes. But a stranger, inopportune, leans on the gate, admiring the summer blossoms and, long as she crouches between the prickly leaves, will not pass. He is still watching when her voice rebukes him for his unmannerly gazing and turning he sees Charlotta—

"like a nymph half risen
From the green bushes which had been her prison."

Slowly, Heinrich, for that was the stranger's name, draws the half-unwilling Lotta into conversation with praise of Theodore's music, and so, gradually they come to meeting, to a friendship swiftly falling into love. Charlotta's days become tumultuous, striving between Heinrich, ardent and young as she is, who would banish loneliness, eagerly fill every need, and Theodore, cold, restricting, yet able to tangle and keep her by the sheer power of his playing.

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A touch, and

"The four strings of his violin
Were spinning like bees on a day in Spring."

her heart was Theodore's, carried away from unbearable moments into notes of sunlight merging into lilies that blew aside as they drifted out on an ocean "Wide as a day and blue as a flower" till Theodore "drew her into the shade of the sails

"And whispered tales
Of voyages in the China seas,
And his arm around her
Held and bound her.
She almost swooned,
With the breeze and the moon
And the slipping sea,
And he beside her,
Touching her, leaning—
The ship careening,
With the white moon shining steadily over
Her and her lover,
Theodore, still her lover!"

Yet, even as the notes blow into gold and die, luminously, so, as the violin rests Charlotta's dreams also, chilled, fade in coldness.

One unexpected evening Theodore takes her with him to the opera, and sitting there, alone amongst the multitude, she watches his bow, "lifted up into another world," her love quickening with his notes, Heinrich utterly excluded, banished her thoughts. Yet all her enthusiasm is spent for nothing.

"He was so simple, so matter-of-fact
Charlotta Altgeld knew not what to say
To bring him to her dream."

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The hopelessness of any unshared emotion bursts the restraining bonds and "Sobbing out all her hours of despair," contact with her own passionate life, arouses Theodore to momentary answer. Charlotta's days pass, set in a fluttering happiness. She is resolute she will never see Heinrich again. But with autumn, with the arrival of a new opera, music is first again with Theodore, and patience gives way to despair as she realises

"That his short interest in her was a light
Flared up an instant only in the night."

Slowly she drifts, for all her resolutions, to passing Heinrich's shop, into nodding, then to speech, at last to a renewal of the meetings. Existence becomes sharp with torment ; Heinrich, and actual love, Theodore and his playing.

"She was washing the dishes, her hands all suds,
When the sound began,
Long as the span
Of a white road snaking about a hill
The orchards are filled
With cherry blossoms at butterfly poise."

The sleepiness of the forest, its mutable, its invisible rhythms float into the room, leaves, pines, mist become notes, fluid, innumerable.

"There is a twittering up in the branches,
A chirp and a lilt,
And crimson atilt on a swaying twig.
Wings ! Wings !
And a little ruffled-out throat which sings."

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Birds answer each other, the heavy splashing of leaves merges into water, "the deck is aslant in the bubbling breeze," and through it all, through the swinging of the masts and canvas

"She lies
Looking up in his eyes
As he bends farther over.
Theodore, still her lover!"

And all his words, as Charlotta feels her world break, with the ceasing notes, "Don't speak to me at all. It will be best. If I am quiet till I go." She is alone, alone with a ticking clock and his violin. A locket Heinrich had given her presses her fingers. Emptiness, with the instrument that held Theodore's love from her open in its case. Hate swings it out, above her head "Smashed on the grate, the violin broke in two."

"Cuckoo! Cuckoo! the clock kept striking on;
But no one listened. Frau Altgeld had gone."

Stronger than "Pickthorn Manor" and more interesting technically, the "Cremona Violin" consciously is not wrought with quite so frail a touch. There is an element of forceful eagerness in Charlotta quite other than the delicate sensitiveness of Eunice. But never before in any poem have the unnumbered rhythms, the quiverings, curves, cadences, of music, a forest, swinging water, been so subjected to words. Nor is it tinged with any coldness of experiment; surely it will never be possible to pass an orchard again without remembering "Cherry blossoms at butterfly poise," or to see a bird without "Crimson atilt on a swaying twig" coming into the mind.

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These longer narrative poems are so overlaid with beauty they need to be read several times. Yet, in spite of their sense of a past age—and only a historian breathing deeply of the impulses of each period could set so actual a picture before the vision—perhaps it is the little vivid outbursts of a personal mood that are dearest, hold the most enchantment. Of the remaining four poems in this first section, "The Cross Roads" is too acute with horror to afford much delight; "In a Roxbury Garden" belongs properly to the poems of experiment, and "1777," a study of contrasts, becomes a bridge directed towards the second division, "Bronze Tablets"; but before leaving "Figurines in Old Saxe" I will quote "Patterns," originally printed in the "Imagist Anthology" for 1916, and assuredly one of the finest poems Miss Lowell has written:—

PATTERNS.

correct
I walk down the garden paths,
And all the daffodils
Are blowing, and the bright blue squills.
another line like this to her
I walk down the patterned garden-paths
In my stiff, brocaded gown.
With my powdered hair and jewelled fan,
placement
I too am a rare
Pattern. As I wander down
The garden paths.

My dress is richly figured,
And the train
Makes a pink and silver stain
On the gravel, and the thrift
Of the borders.
Just a plate of current fashion,

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Tripping by in high-heeled ribboned shoes.
Not a softness anywhere about me,
Only whalebone and brocade.
And I sink on a seat in the shade
Of a lime tree. For my passion
Wars against the stiff brocade.
The daffodils and squilla
Flutter in the breeze
As they please.
And I weep;
For the lime-tree is in blossom
And one small flower has dropped upon my bosom.

And the plashing of the waterdrops
In the marble fountain
Comes down the garden-paths.
The dripping never stops.
Underneath my stiffened gown
Is the softness of a woman bathing in a marble basin,
A basin in the midst of hedges grown
So thick, she cannot see her lover hiding,
But she guesses he is near,
And the sliding of the water
Seems the stroking of a dear
Hand upon her.
What is Summer in a fine brocaded gown !
I should like to see it lying in a heap upon the ground.
All the pink and silver crumpled up on the ground.

I would be the pink and silver as I ran along the paths,
And he would stumble after,
Bewildered by my laughter.
I should see the sun flashing from his sword-hilt and the buckles on
his shoes
I would choose
To lead him in a maze along the patterned paths,
A bright and laughing maze for my heavy-booted lover.
Till he caught me in the shade,

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And the buttons of his waistcoat bruised my body as he clasped me,
Aching, melting, unafraid.
With the shadows of the leaves and the sundrops,
And the plopping of the waterdrops,
All about us in the open afternoon—
I am very like to swoon
With the weight of this brocade,
For the sun sifts through the shade.

Underneath the fallen blossom
In my bosom,
In a letter I have hid.
It was brought to me this morning by a rider from the Duke.
"Madam, we regret to inform you that Lord Hartwell
Died in action Thursday se'nnight,"
As I read it in the white morning sunlight,
The letters squirmed like snakes.
"Any answer, Madam?" said my footman.
"No," I told him.
"See that the messenger takes some refreshment.
No, no answer."
And I walked into the garden,
Up and down the patterned paths,
In my stiff, correct brocade.
The blue and yellow flowers stood up proudly in the sun,
Each one.
I stood upright too,
Held rigid to the pattern,
By the stiffness of my gown.
Up and down I walked,
Up and down.

In a month he would have been my husband.
In a month, here, underneath this lime,
We would have broke the pattern ;
He for me, and I for him,
He as Colonel, I as Lady,
On this shady seat.

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He had a whim
That sunlight carried blessing.
And I answered, "It shall be as you have said."
Now he is dead.

In Summer and in Winter I shall walk
Up and down
The patterned garden-paths
In my stiff, brocaded gown.
The squills and daffodils
Will give place to pillared roses, and to asters, and to snow.
I shall go
Up and down,
In my gown.
Gorgeously arrayed,
Boned and stayed.
And the softness of my body will be guarded from embrace
By each button, hook, and lace.
For the man who should loose me is dead,
Fighting with the Duke in Flanders,
In a pattern called a war.
Christ! What are patterns for?

Loneliness, the loneliness that is the core of so much of this poetry, sharp with wasted beauty, the sunshine, the summer that can never mean anything more, bends the passionate cadence with its spilt, rebellious life, longing made immortally articulate. But I must not mar the loveliness of this poem, even with praise.

"The Overgrown Pasture." Grass misty with dwarf buds and a hint of orchard blossom in the air a wind beats to silence. It is characteristic of Miss Lowell that with a word she builds a picture before the substance of her thought is reached. Again the four poems in this section are studies of the madness, the degeneration, too apt to be the outcome of that unending monotony of existence

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inseparable from isolation in remote districts, which people, who talk glibly on a June day of the joys of a life spent "miles from anywhere" too often exclude from their minds.

It is interesting to read these poems in conjunction with Miss Lowell's admirable essay on Robert Frost, in her new book "Tendencies in Modern American Poetry." Both poets are writing of the same country; the problems which interest them are identical, but Frost is acquiescent, something of the blunting influence of isolation has crept into his work, while Miss Lowell is vital with protest, so aware of injustice and repression.

It is impossible to detach a line without these poems suffering irreparable harm, and they are too long to quote. They are so natural, so rigorous with simplicity, touches of sheer loveliness quivering upon the tragedy till they become a torment to read; as though Miss Lowell, sternly suppressing the rich beauty which is her life, the sense of it yet carried the words invisibly forward, charged with its fettered force.

Why is it after reading "Reaping" with its undercurrent

"I was tired o'wishin' and wishin'
An' gitten' no comfort."

or "Number 3 on the Docket," full of the numbing horror of silence ending in madness, Frost's poems, beautiful as they are, seem so inadequate? How has Miss Lowell captured this wonderful sense of life? Is it that in her mind tenderness is as swift as anger, her extraordinary capacity to see both sides? This it is, and more; reading this section one is tempted to demand if there is any limit to the range and wideness of Miss Lowell's mind.

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"Clocks Tick a Century." Also they mark an epoch, for with the opening of "Spring Day" or "Towns in Colour" we come to a revolution, not alone of form, but of expression itself, to a sense never captured, never apparent in literature before.

For years I have grieved that poetry was inarticulate of the transient aspects of an hour, some effect of colour, some movement of wind or rain, actually forming an unconscious part of dream, yet apparently unrelated in any way to thought. It is true I never analysed my impressions to this, but I knew something was lacking, and only with discovery of these poems did I realise what it was.

Miss Lowell has stated in the preface to "Men, Women and Ghosts" that "London Excursion," by John Gould Fletcher, turned her in the direction of the "unrelated" method. It is possible that reading this poem may have resulted in some impulse to experiment, but the influence was slight and indirect. "London Excursion" is dominant with the poet, with the aspect of the city as it presents itself somewhat harshly to his eyes, while "Spring Day," charged as it is with suggested personality, has snared the fluttering day itself and set it on white paper. The real foundations of these new discoveries may be traced, though imperfectly, from the beginnings of her writing.

In spite of numerous poems, her evident fondness for infancy, it is curious how little trace of personal childhood Miss Lowell's poetry contains. One is tempted to wonder if she saved her own, hiding it in a dark box that nothing might rob her of its freshness, till, grown to maturity, it is withdrawn, to paint her words with light, before she will make use of them. Yet, if direct reference

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is absent, the sense of it exists as an elemental root, binding and uniting the ever-widening fibres of her thought.

More than one piece of paper, more than one experience, was crumpled, I imagine, before the mastery of technical experiment shown in these later poems, was reached. "Spring Day" brings with it a sense absolutely original to poetry ; it is April come to literature again. Difficult as it is to put into words what constitutes this freshness, felt rather than perceived, perhaps it lies in its escape from a mere photograph of actuality, in the union of colour with sound and the feeling of Spring, vivid with an intense, though merely suggested individuality, set before the vision, not flatly, but round and luminous, fluid with light. This poem is fuller than aught I have read of the audacity of morning, bolder than any dream, with the freshness felt when hope of achievement quickens with hint of reality. How firmly every sentence fits into the cadence of the whole. It has ever been a delight to wander about a city, noting the traffic, the noise, the street, that owns but three or four unalterable moods, yet daily makes them other with new delicacy of light, but none before Miss Lowell (most original of poets) have captured this sense I had unwillingly deemed too mutable, too fluid to be confined by any words.

The poems in this final division I have read again and again. Personally, they interest me more than any Miss Lowell published up to 1917. I wish I could quote the "Dinner Party," another variation of "Miscast" with its sense of barriers, barriers that blunt the finest spirit labouring to penetrate them, but, unlike "Miscast," having a triumphant end. I will say nothing of

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"Three Pieces," grotesques "for String Quartet." As "vers libre" it is enormously interesting, but being ignorant of music I cannot tell how successfully it follows the movement of the notes.

"Red Slippers," the first poem in "Towns in Colour," is delightful. How simple it is, yet how perfectly do the lines express the vivid scarlet breaking the turbulent day. But it needed Miss Lowell's trained vision to fashion this enchantment from red shoes and insubstantial rain. Mediocrity would never have noticed them or would have stopped by the doll in the further window. "One has often seen shoes, but whoever saw a cardboard lotus bud before?" But to those who use their eyes could anything surpass the delicate wideness of the ending

"The flaws of grey, windy sleet beat on the shop-window where there are only red slippers"?

It is essential to be intimate with these poems. White is taken as in "Thompson's Lunch Room, Grand Central Station," or gold, as in "An Opera House," and under the semblance of colour a whole aspect of the city is made enduring in a page. "Afternoon Rain in State Street" is a fine study of the harsher effects of storm, but perhaps the triumph of the "unrelated" method is "An Aquarium." It is impossible to have watched the darting iridescence of fish troubling luminous water without wishing to keep the memory, without becoming conscious there was no phrase in which to imprison it. I know I have turned away, unwilling to gaze when expression seemed denied, but here in a few lines is the

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aquarium ; even the pebbles are not forgotten, nor the outer world of wind and waves and islands.

" An oblong pane of straw-coloured shimmer,
Across it, in a tangent,
A smear of rose, black, silver.
Short twists and upstartings,
Rose-black, in a setting of bubbles:
Sunshine playing between red and black flowers
On a blue and gold lawn."

I am dumbed with admiration as I read these poems ; loving them as I do to attempt to speak of them is to be oppressed with failure—the impossibility of any adequate praise.

Sensitive as Miss Lowell is to the loveliness laid waste by war, "The Allies," "A Painter on Silk," "Lead Soldiers," compress her anger into points of fire ; but of all the modern poems on battle I have read, both in beauty and in power, the "Bombardment" seems to me incomparably the best. It is original, forged of strength, and the poet is never once bewildered by the immensity of the subject into loosing obvious thoughts in a vague obscurity of phrase. Only a very great writer could have kept it so universal, could have indicated so certainly the differing lives that shaped the city and kept them so subordinate to the flame, rain and fear, a period ending, the vibrating guns.

At first "The Fruit Shop" seems one of those pictures Miss Lowell can make so vivid—oranges, currants, almonds, heaped in earthen bowls and woven baskets open to sunlight ; but as the poem is read and the fruits are touched it is the existence of the town that moves out of the darkness, France grown a little weary of

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revolution and of war. A slow, slightly deadened atmosphere linked to the succeeding poems by the sudden movement of the end.

"Malmaison" is a novel in a few pages, a section drawn from the honeycomb of the past, spread on the grass to be analysed by sunlight. A novel, with France dependant on the narrative. How delightful the beginning is, the lightness—roses—the white dust, the indefinable significance of trivial things. Not a wasted syllable as the poem grows passionate as a desert sun, without its aridness as it slumbers, idly tolerant of the chatter drifted between the open leaves. "Indeed, the roses bloom at Malmaison. It is youth, youth untrammelled and advancing, trundling a country ahead of it as though it were a hoop." Only the intuition of a poet pouring life into years of unending study could regather a vanished age and make it seem the present as we read. History opens with the roses, shuts with them. "Tears in Malmaison. And years to come knocking by, minute after minute. Years, many years, and tears, and cold, pouring rain." The flowers become menacing in their loveliness. "The Empress sits alone, and the clock ticks, one after one. The clock nicks off the edges of her life. She is chipped like an old bit of china ; she is frayed like a garment of last year's wearing. She is soft, crinkled, like a fading rose." There is more than a woman's loneliness in this, it is history grown old, a splendour grown afraid. But there is respite—memories, even as a period passing in exhausted weakness, turning to vanished greatness breathes a few gasps more.

"The Hammers," good as it is, has never seemed to me quite so successful as "Malmaison," perhaps because it is not so

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concentrated and aims at catching the outward semblance of the time rather than its heart. But how well the building of the "Bellerophon" is contrasted with the forge, how accurately the different aspects of Paris are indicated in the verse. This time the sections are united not with roses opening and falling, but by hammers ; strokes beating history as the ship is decked, the horse shod, the eagle taken down. The final pages of "St. Helena" are profound as the age itself.

I suspect history of the larger share in the evolution of "polyphonic prose," the form selected for many of these poems. It is interesting to note the increasing influence of the past ages moving side by side with a tense desire to realise the future, the immediate present, in most modern writers. Henri de Regnier has this sense very strongly, and in "Henry III.," by Paul Fort, exists the finest "polyphonic" poem written until America took the new form from a wearying France, to be perfected by Miss Lowell and John Gould Fletcher.

Is not the development peculiar to modernity an increased and impartial sense of the value of the past expressed by the vision of those who own the freshness and the thought of the future ? "Sea-Blue and Blood-Red" and "Guns as Keys ; and the Great Gate Swings," both published in 1917, would seem to prove it is. They are such a widening of barriers ; they bring into literature an element imperceptible in poetry before.

It is fitting "Sea-Blue and Blood-Red" should begin with the Mediterranean, with Nelson's ships moving through sunlight into the Bay of Naples.

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"Blue as the tip of a salvia blossom, the inverted cup of the sky arches over the sea." Miss Lowell has learnt the secret of beginnings, of making a whole atmosphere live in a single line. How original it is ; it brings a new shade of blue into the language, fashions of ordinary colour a moment frail and sensitive as the uncaptured mood of a fragile day. It is best to see Lady Hamilton first as the Neapolitans saw her, with "her apple blossom face under the big, blue hat," and none who have driven through the narrow streets towards Pompeii can fail to recognise here is Naples itself, thrown on to paper by a master hand.

"North-north-west, and a whole-sail breeze, ruffling up the larkspur-blue sea, breaking the tops of the waves into egg-white foam, shoving ripple after ripple of pale jade-green over the shoals of Aboukir Bay." Only a sailor could have written that, a sailor seeing with a poet's eyes. Nothing I have read has brought battle before me so vividly as the sea-fights in this poem. It is difficult to believe they have been written a full century since the struggle ended. Sentence follows sentence as though it was a man who had worked the guns, telling, writing the story, while memory was yet vivid and unblurred, and lighting it with flashes of the beauty he would have observed but might have lacked capacity to express. Battle, with Nelson and Naples, blue and red, behind it all.

In words warm with history "the red, half-closed eye of Vesuvius" triumph, fighting and darkness pass before the mind. Pass, obscured by the Admiral, by Emma Hamilton "always before him, a mist of rose and silver, a damask irradiation, shading and lighting like a palpitant gem." Half Europe slips by in a page,

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quietness, another call of blue water, splendour and tragedy, the restrained, the trenchant end.

Before this bewildering and passionate magnificence even Miss Lowell's earlier poems are robbed of a little of their life. It is, as she has spoken of Lady Hamilton, "Quivering, blood-swept, vivid." It is charged with loveliness, universal, yet epical of the time.

It is inevitable Miss Lowell should be ahead of her age. All who discover are that, but I should like to point out that wideness of knowledge and hatred of aridity are the signs of all Imagist writers, and that those who scoff at them are usually minds who will whisper privately, "Don't you think Shakespeare is a very overrated writer"? and despise the treasuries of literature to the extent of being equally as ignorant of all the Elizabethans as they are of "vers libre." If to give respite from depressing reality be any test of greatness, Miss Lowell is sure of immortality. She belongs to the very few whose poems are almost pain to read, so acute are they with beauty.

So charged with meaning it is a poem in itself, "Guns as Keys ; and the Great Gate Swings" crashes across the ears with the salt vigour of waves smiting the crisp gold of sand. Sound flinging words ahead, racing with colour to regather them, history in pursuit of poetry to tangle it with blossom, the epic of modernity concentrated into thirty pages, in this poem Miss Lowell has fashioned the pressure of development, the falling of outworn barriers to be replaced by a new restriction, the unending story of the movement of the world.

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Reading these pages, dumbled with admiration, I wonder if Miss Lowell herself knows what she has accomplished. They have evoked for me, who owned a natural hatred of Japan, a new land, built up with touch upon fragile touch of loveliness, as tense with the East, intangible and acquiescent, as "Sea-Blue and Blood-Red" was with the West, rough, impulsive and defiant. How she can blend the two, be of them each so completely, yet keep each line so distinctive of her own individuality, I cannot tell ; but note how definitely is indicated the exact atmosphere peculiar to each "stepping stone," Madeira, St. Helena, Singapore, and how America, the nearing of the ships, is suggested but never stated throughout the Japanese threads of the poem.

"Due East, far West. Distant as the nests of the opposite winds. Removed as fire and water are, as the clouds and the roots of the hills, as the wills of youth and age. Let the key-guns be mounted, make a brave show of waging war, and pry off the lid of Pandora's box once more. Get in at any cost and let out at little so it seems, but wait—wait—there is much to follow through the Great Gate.' "

Moving, original, deliberate, there is an epic significance in every sentence of that paragraph, it is a key to the balanced greatness audible throughout the entire poem.

Turmoil of departure, history overlaid by the trivialities of an ordinary day, the steam frigate "Mississippi" plunges quietly over the flashing water, America swinging forward to the opening of Japan.

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"At Mishiwa in the province of Kai," subdued tripping of feet over the rank softness of a forest path, the East, impalpable and passive, slides through the cadence, amazes the startled ears. It is ominous with suggestion of an apathy strained to breaking, of something no heart has attempted to explore.

"Ah! the purple bougainvillea! And the sweet smell of the heliotrope and geranium hedges! Ox-drawn sledges clattering over cobbles—what a fine pause in an endless voyaging." We are back in Western openness again, with what a Southern deepness added! Green water and sailor talk alternating with the quiet of a "bow moon" and the "bobbing of paper lanterns."

It is impossible to trace the voyage, the opening of the Gate in detail. Quotation is difficult, for to omit a single sentence is to watch the tissue part in a glaring rent. But I have read nothing in all literature more full of colour than the Japanese festival, gold with its hints of purple and silver, rounded and curved with sound.

Every writer is aware of words that, coming into his hands lose their everyday significance and are vested with new and delicate beauty, culled from his own life. Two favourites with Miss Lowell are "pungent" and "peony," and how she has built of them, in the following passage, the unconsciousness of Japan, wilfully blind to the approaching ships.

"The ladies,
Wistaria Blossom, Cloth-of-Silk, and Deep Snow,
With their ten attendants,
Are come to Asakusa
To gaze at peonies.
To admire crimson-carmine peonies,

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To stare in admiration at bomb-shaped, white and sulphur peonies
To caress with a soft finger
Single, rose-flat peonies,
Tight, incurved, red-edged peonies.
Spin-wheel circle, amaranth peonies.
To smell the acrid pungence of peony blooms,
And dream for months afterwards
Of the temple garden at Asakusa,
Where they walked together
Looking at peonies."

How marvellously she uses words, and yet how firmly they are subdued to the thought and cadence of the whole. Weakness may not rest near her, strength trembles upon each phrase, sleeps behind it or carries it forward, expression become pure colour, passionate essence of a mood, rigidly compressed.

"Tiger rain on the temple bridge of carved green-stone,
Slanting tiger lines of rain on the lichened lanterns of the gateway,
On the stone statues of mythical warriors.
Striped rain making the bells of the pagoda roofs flutter,
Tiger-footing on the bluish stones of the courtyard,
Beating, snapping, on the cheese-rounds of open umbrellas,
Licking, tiger-tongued, over the straw mat which a pilgrim wears upon his
shoulders,
Gnawing, tiger-toothed, into the paper mask
Which he carries on his back.
Tiger-clawed rain scattering the peach-blossoms,
Tiger tails of rain lashing furiously among the cryptomerias."

Could this beauty of movement ever have been attained with the traditional metres? To read this cadence is an adventure in itself; it is to be dissatisfied with the old clatter of rhyme for evermore. Not since the Elizabethans has such a mastery of words been

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reached in English, technically I am dazed increasingly with wonder as I read it, one had never surmised such enchantment could have been achieved with words.

Nor are the Western sections of the poem any less beautiful. Miss Lowell is a sailor in her heart if not in actuality, for it is real water stirring through this poem, no imagined ocean pictured on an idle afternoon by the shore, but the unresting tumult seamen know, loved and experienced till the pages smell of tar and roughen with rope as they are read. For pure beauty of presentation I must quote the following, charged as it is with the suggestion peculiar to Miss Lowell, as the ships near the unobservant land:—

"Four vessels giving easily to the low running waves and catspaw breezes of a summer sea. July, 1853, Mid-Century, but just on the turn. Mid-Century, with the vanishing half fluttering behind on a foam-bubbled wake. Four war-ships steering for the 'Land of Great Peace,' caparisoned in state, cleaving a jewelled ocean to a Dragon Gate. Behind it, the quiet of afternoon. Golden light reflecting from the inner sides of shut portals. War is an old wives' tale, a frail, beautiful embroidery of other ages. The panoply of battle fades. Arrows rust in arsenals, spears stand useless on their butts in vestibules. Cannon lie unmounted in castle yards, and rats and snakes make nests in them and rear their young in unmolested satisfaction.

"The sun of midsummer lies over the 'Land of Great Peace,' and behind the shut gate they do not hear the paddle wheels of distant vessels unceasingly turning and advancing, through the jewelled scintillations of the encircling sea."

I have no words to paint the beauty of this poem ; to speak of it is difficult without quotation of the whole. It is not the mere loveliness of word, but the profound historical significance of each sentence, the impartiality of outlook, the expression of a new world. For myself, having read it I could not keep my thought from it until I had it all by heart. Even its richness is no tangible

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element, but is thick with freshness, the wild flush of her pendent peonies, or the hot bloom of petals streaked with sun and velvet. Only in "polyphonic prose" could the alternate atmosphere of the vessels and the East ever have been so vividly expressed. But I insist too much on colour and outward form because it is so much easier of expression. Her greatest achievement lies, not in her experiments, valuable as they are, but in the uniting of all elements into wise and confident vision.

There is a soft enchanted quietness blown about "Lacquer Prints," drenched as they are with the influence of Japan till they crust to a porcelain frailer than the lining of a bird's egg, or the flushed enamel of a sea-buried shell. Life and movement are subdued to a thin stem holding an open flower. They are pure colour expressed in curving lines drawn over thoughts so intimate they shrink, even in reading, back to solitude. Profound and lovely, how much is concentrated in the few, following lines:—

A YEAR PASSES

"Beyond the porcelain fence of the pleasure garden,
I hear the frogs in the blue-green rice-fields;
But the sword-shaped moon
Has cut my heart in two."

And this is as beautiful:—

DESOLATION.

"Under the plum blossoms are nightingales;
But the sea is hidden in an egg-white mist,
And they are silent.

Actual solitude of dream, the retreat in her own heart to beauty, in "Free Fantasia on Japanese Themes," essence of loveliness

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wrested from Japan, has become definitely blended with the personality of the poet. It is truth perceptible through a sheath of richness, the longing for adventure made immortally articulate. But I am not sure that "On a Certain Critic" is not her finest achievement. Nothing more passionate exists for me in the whole of literature. To read the poem is to be burnt with flame.

ON A CERTAIN CRITIC.

Well, John Keats,
I know how you felt when you swung out of the inn
And started up Box Hill after the moon.
Lord ! How she twinkled in and out of the box bushes
Where they arched over the path.
How she peeked at you and tempted you,
And how you longed for the "naked waist" of her
You had put into your second canto.
You felt her silver running all over you,
And the shine of her flashed in your eyes,
So that you stumbled over roots and things.
Ah ! How beautiful ! How beautiful !
Lying out on the open hill
With her white radiance touching you
Lightly,
Flecking over you.
"My Lady of the Moon,
I flow out to your whiteness,
Brightness.
My hands cup themselves
About your disk of pearl and fire ;
Lie upon my face,
Burn me with the cold of your hot white flame.
Diana,
High, distant Goddess,
I kiss the needles of this furze bush

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Because your feet have trodden it.
Moon !
Moon !
I am prone before you.
Pity me,
And drench me in loveliness.
I have written you a poem ;
I have made a girdle for you of words ;
Like a shawl my words will cover you,
So that men may read of you and not be burnt as I have been.
Sere my heart until it is a crinkled leaf,
I have held you in it for a moment,
And exchanged my love with yours
On a high hill at midnight.
Was that your tear or mine, Bright Moon ?
It was round and full of moonlight.
Don't go !
My God ! Don't go !
You escape from me,
You slide through my hands.
Great Immortal Goddess,
Dearly Beloved,
Don't leave me.
My hands clutch at moon-beams,
And catch each other.
My Dear ! My Dear !
My beautiful far-shining lady !
Oh ! God !
I am tortured with this anguish of unbearable beauty."
Then you stumbled down the hill, John Keats.
Perhaps you fell once or twice ;
It is a rough path,
And you weren't thinking of that.
Then you wrote
By a wavering candle,
And the moon frosted your window till it looked like a sheet of blue ice.
And as you tumbled into bed, you said :
"It's a piece of luck I thought of coming out to Box Hill."

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Now comes a sprig little gentleman,
And turns over your manuscript with his mincing fingers,
And tabulates places and dates.
He says your moon was a copy-book maxim,
And talks about the spirit of solitude,
And the salvation of genius through the social order.
I wish you were here to damn him
With a good, round, agreeable oath, John Keats.
But just snap your fingers;
You and the moon will still love
When he and his papers have slithered away
In the bodies of innumerable worms.

And England's attitude towards American literature is one of intolerant indifference. To mention Miss Lowell's name is to meet apathy, bewilderment. Is an English lack of interest in contemporary writers other than her own responsible for this? Yet American books possess no bar of language to deter explorers, and it is bitter to think that, for the few in whom the spirit of discovery is alive, this want of general initiative makes knowledge of other countries increasingly difficult to obtain. I have no doubt the future will rank Miss Lowell among the great poets of all ages, but meantime I grieve the present should deny itself the acclamation of this poetry as it slips, fresh and vital, from her growing thought.

But Miss Lowell defies appreciation. There is such a unity about her work, quotation, especially of her "polyphonic prose," must render her injustice. To know her at all the poems must be dwelt with, persuaded to intimacy, for, under their apparent simplicity of phrase, they are rich with realisation of mature emotions and passionate with enthusiasms rare in this unexploring age.

THE ART OF AMY LOWELL

Crushed experiences spilling in drops of light, the curves of her cadences are sharp with truth, with sensitiveness to the irony of existence which yet believes in adventure and in resistance. Dreams, and a core of ever-recurring loneliness, perhaps the soul of their intense life. Most individual of writers, she possesses a vision seldom encountered even in poetry, a power of giving perfect expression to another's emotion in a concise and trenchant line. But I am not sure that the truest criticism was not in the unsought words of a boy of eight who, listening to "A Roxbury Garden," said, "I should like to hear that poem again, please, it makes you see things."

That is it. The offering of her own vision to unobservant eyes, the breaking of innumerable barriers, for, among all poets, Miss Lowell is essentially an explorer.

